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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Counterterrorism in South America

The security organizations of several South American countries may be cooperating in actions against political refugees in Argentina.

Early this month armed men ransacked the offices of the Argentine Catholic Commission on Immigration and stole records containing information on thousands of refugees and immigrants. Argentine police did not investigate the crime and dismissed it as a simple robbery.

Two days later twenty-four Uruguayan and Chilean refugees, many of whom were the subject of Commission files, were kidnaped and tortured for several hours. Some of the refugees later identified their interrogators as security officers from Chile and Uruguay. Presumably, the Chilean-Uruguayan operation could not have been undertaken without the cooperation of the Argentine security forces.

In the past few weeks two prominent Uruguayan political exiles and a former leftist president of Bolivia have been killed under mysterious circumstances in Argentina. Argentine Minister of Economy Martinez de Hoz recently told the US ambassador in Buenos Aires that his government was not responsible for the murder of ex-president Torres and speculated--without providing evidence--that leftist extremists had eliminated "one of their own."

There are also several reports that Chilean leftist leader Edgardo Enriquez, who was arrested by Argentine security forces on April 10, was subsequently turned over to the Chileans and is now dead. Meanwhile, the Brazilian press reports that the Argentine government has handed over to Chilean authorities a Brazilian political exile wanted by Santiago.

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The Argentine junta has denied allegations that it has violated "human rights" and recently issued an official communique declaring that it would not repatriate refugees by force. Despite this and similar disclaimers by respected Argentine leaders, US Embassy officials in Buenos Aires suspect the acquiescence, and perhaps the direct involvement, of the Argentine security forces in many of these incidents.

In early 1974 security officials from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia met in Buenos Aires to prepare coordinated actions against subversive targets. They agreed to establish diplomatic security liaison channels, to exchange intelligence information on a regular basis, and to facilitate the international movement of security officers on official business.

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